



**BIBB COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
GENERAL ORDER**

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Subject: **FAMILY VIOLENCE**

Number: **920**

Index as: Civil Disputes
Criminal Disputes
Domestic Disputes
Family Violence

Standards:

APPROVED BY:

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920 FAMILY VIOLENCE PURPOSE:

To prescribe courses of action which personnel of the Bibb County Sheriff's Office should take in response to domestic violence that will enforce the law while also serving to intervene and prevent future incidents of violence.

920 FAMILY VIOLENCE POLICY:

It shall be the policy of the Bibb County Sheriff's Office to respond to and investigate incidents of domestic violence. If probable cause exists that an act of family violence has occurred, deputies will respond by making the necessary arrests.

DEFINITION:

Family Violence: The occurrence of one or more of the following acts between past or present spouses, persons who are parents of the same child, parents and children, stepparents and stepchildren, foster parents and foster children, or other persons living or formerly living in the same household:

1. Any felony; or
2. Commission of offenses of battery, simple battery, simple assault, assault, stalking, criminal damage to property, unlawful restraint, criminal trespass, or interference with an emergency communication.

The term "family violence" does not include reasonable discipline administered by a

parent or legal guardian to a child in the form of corporal punishment, restraint, or detention.

A. PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO FAMILY VIOLENCE INCIDENTS.

1. Dispatch Response

- a. 911 dispatchers will give a domestic violence call the priority of any other life-threatening call.
- b. When possible a minimum of two (2) deputies will be dispatched to all domestic family violence incidents. If two (2) deputies from the same district are not available for dispatch, notify the District Supervisor.
- c. Upon receipt of a call for service, the call-taker will determine if the call involves an incident of family violence.
- d. The call-taker should ascertain as much information as possible from the complainant, to include:
 - 1) injuries;
 - 2) weapons involved;
 - 3) if the suspect is under the influence of alcohol or drugs;
 - 4) Suspect description;
 - 5) if children are present;
 - 6) if the Sheriff's Office has been called about this suspect before, and if so, how many times;
 - 7) if there is an order of protection on file. (Aggressor information is needed, Name, DOB, Race and Sex to properly run an inquiry via GCIC), and;
 - 8) If the call taker can hear violent behavior on the open line, the call taker should note in CAD what is being said and update the CAD information for dispatch as it comes available.
- e. If the dispatcher receives a second call to cancel the original call, he/she will advise the responding units to continue to the incident location to ensure that all parties are safe.

2. Patrol Response

- a. Each deputy dispatched to a domestic violence call shall respond without delay.
 - b. If the disturbance is still in progress, the units should coordinate their arrival to the scene, if at all possible.
 - c. Deputies should park their vehicles in a manner that facilitates accessibility and a safe approach to the residence.
 - d. Deputies will not enter a private residence except on the direct invitation of the owner or resident, unless probable cause exists to make an arrest, a confrontation is in progress, or it is necessary to ensure the safety and welfare of the occupants.
 - e. Deputies shall make contact with every occupant of the residence before leaving and visually check their well-being.
 - f. Deputies should not hesitate to make a forced entry if doing so is necessary to protect the victim(s). In making this decision, deputies will take into account everything they personally observe, all physical evidence, and all things learned from witnesses or other persons supplying information.
 - g. Upon arrival at the scene, deputies will:
 - 1) Determine the location and condition of all victims, witnesses, and suspects.
 - 2) Determine if any weapon is involved or is in the home. Deputies shall take positions that allow them to monitor one another's safety. Deputies should avoid interviewing parties in locations that might provide access to weapons.
 - 3) Provide the appropriate level of aid to injured parties.
 - 4) Separate victims (who should be out of the suspect's view), suspects, and witnesses.
 - 5) Photograph the victims, suspects, and scene as appropriate.
3. Preliminary Investigation
- a. Interview all victims, suspects, children, and other witnesses separately. Children will be interview in a manner appropriate for their ages and in a non-threatening environment.
 - b. Ask all victims and suspects if they have injuries or any pain, even if there are no visible injuries.

- c. Document the victims' and suspects' condition. This will include, but is not limited to, torn clothing, disheveled appearances, evidence of injury, and disarray in the house.
- d. Determine which of the parties involved was the primary aggressor by investigating the following:
 - 1) Prior family violence involving either party.
 - 2) The relative severity of the injuries inflicted on each person.
 - 3) The potential for future injury.
 - 4) Whether one of the parties acted in self-defense. Look for "red flags" that typically indicate defensive injuries.
 - i. Defensive injuries left by the victim on the body of the attacker.
 - aa. Scratches on the attacker's arms.
 - bb. Bite marks on the attacker's arms, chest, ankles or legs.
 - ii. Defensive injuries on the victim.
 - aa. Bruises on the back of arms, legs, or hands.
 - bb. Bruises on the back of buttocks and lower back (the victim will often curl into a fetal position to escape injury).
 - 5) Deputies should also look for signs and symptoms of strangling/choking.
 - i. Scratches that may have been inflicted by the assailant or the victim who is trying to release the choke hold.
 - ii. Bruises that may be delayed in presentation.
 - iii. Spots on the face and/or neck due to blood vessels that may have busted from the pressure of a choke hold.
 - iv. Blood red eyes due to capillary rupture in the white portion of the eyes.
 - v. Rope or cord burns or other linear injuries caused by an object used to throttle the victim.
 - vi. Neck swelling.

vii. Raspy breath.

- e. Under no circumstances shall deputies “take sides” with either party in the dispute. Family violence incidents will be handled as criminal offenses.
 - f. Reconciliation, divorce, or other such alternatives should never be suggested with the parties involved. Deputies should be prepared to refer victims to shelters, victim assistance programs, counseling, and other useful community programs.
 - g. Deputies should not advise victims of family violence that they should press or drop charges. If a victim spontaneously states that prosecution is not desired, victims should be told that the decision to prosecute is made by the State Court Solicitor or the District Attorney.
 - h. Whenever possible, a supervisor will also respond to the location for the purpose of providing additional safety and being available for advice.
 - i. If the victim has a restraining order or other protective order that has not yet been served on the suspect, deputies will inform the suspect of the order and note in the incident report that this was done. Deputies should also enforce the applicable provision of the order (e.g. stay-away provisions). If the victim has an extra copy of the order, deputies should serve the suspect and complete proof of service.
4. Post-Investigation
- a. If probable cause exists and the primary aggressor is on the scene, the deputy will make a warrant-less arrest at that time. This decision is not to be based on the wishes of the victim.
 - b. If probable cause exists and the primary aggressor is not on the scene, the deputy will, as soon as possible, secure an arrest warrant for the primary aggressor at the Magistrate’s Office. This decision shall not be based on the wishes of the victim.
 - c. Deputies are required to obtain a written statement from the victim at the scene.
 - d. If probable cause cannot be established the deputy will still advise the victim of available services, such as the Victim/Witness Assistance Program and protective orders.
 - e. Deputies should attempt follow-up with victims, when appropriate, to assess the physical and/or emotional states of the victim and to acquire any new information pertinent to the case.

B. FAMILY VIOLENCE INCIDENTS INVOLVING DEPUTIES OR BCSO PERSONNEL

1. The Bibb County Sheriff's Office shall maintain a position of zero-tolerance regarding incidents of domestic violence involving deputies or BCSO personnel.
 - a. All Bibb County Deputies shall notify their supervisor of any knowledge they have of employees who may be or have engaged in domestic violence.
 - b. The Sheriff's Office will provide training on domestic violence and the 'zero-tolerance' policy in all phases of a deputy's career.
2. When incidents of domestic violence are alleged to have occurred, the Sheriff's Office will act quickly to protect the victim, arrest the perpetrator and conduct both administrative and criminal investigations.
3. When new deputies are hired, the Bibb County Sheriff's Office will offer training in this policy.
4. In order to provide non-punitive avenues of assistance to deputies and family members before an act of domestic violence occurs, the Sheriff's Office shall make confidential referrals for confidential counseling services to EAS or other community service organizations that have specific expertise in domestic violence.
5. Supervisory Responsibilities
 - a. Demonstration of aggressive behaviors while on the job will be documented by supervisors. These include: stalking and surveillance activities, unusually high incidences of fights, injuries, or disputes.
 - 1) Supervisors should maintain close supervision with deputies whose behavior is inconsistent with acceptable standards for on-duty problem resolution.
 - 2) Supervisors should proactively inquire about all on or off duty injuries pertaining to personnel employed by the Bibb County Sheriff's Office.
 - 3) Supervisors should monitor frequent tardiness and absences.
 - b. Supervisors shall be cognizant of behaviors where deputies may be exhibiting signs of possible domestic violence related problems, which may include increased use of force during arrests, alcohol and/or drug abuse, increase in controlling behaviors, stalking activity, aggression towards animals, citizen and co-worker complaints of unwarranted aggression and verbal abuse.
 - 1) Supervisors should make the ranking supervisor on-duty aware of any and all such warning signs.
 - 2) Supervisors shall prepare requests for evaluating a deputy's mental and physical well-being by suitable professionals when behaviors or

circumstances deem it appropriate.

6. Organization-wide Response

- a. The Bibb County Sheriff's Office shall accept all calls or reports, including those made anonymously, involving information about possible sworn BCSO personnel involved in domestic violence as "on-the-record."
- b. Reports of all such accepted and recorded calls shall receive careful follow-up investigation by the Sheriff's Office.
- c. All reports of possible criminal activity implicating sworn BCSO personnel in domestic violence shall be in accordance with all policies governing the handling of any citizen's report of domestic violence.